



A guide for organisations supporting **SIKH VICTIMS OF HATE CRIME**

This is a guide for organisations supporting members of the Sikh community who may have faced either racism or religiously motivated hate crime.

Introduction

This guide is for statutory services, NGOs, the police and criminal justice agencies and aimed to highlight hate crime against Sikhs which often goes unreported.

About us

The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) is a registered charity no.1064544 that links more than 130 UK gurdwaras and other UK Sikh organisations in active cooperation to enhance the image and understanding of Sikhism in the UK.

Anti-Sikh hate crime

Like any other group Sikhs can face racism, however they have also been referred to as the 'invisible' victims of 'Islamophobic' hate and often face a backlash in the aftermath of terror attacks. This is because their religious identity (the turban and beard of observant Sikh men in particular) has been conflated with Islamic extremists.

In fact, freedom of information requests submitted by the NSO to the MET police revealed 28% of victims of 'Islamophobic hate crimes' in London during 2015 were non-Muslims or people of no recorded faith, including Sikhs.

About our community

According to the 2011 census there are 423,158 Sikhs in England and Wales with large communities in both London, the South East and the West Midlands.

Practicing Sikhs wear five symbols often referred to as the 5Ks and men can be identified by their turban (*dastaar*) and beard. Some Sikh women tie turbans.

The Sikh faith emphasizes adherents should remember God, earn an honest living, and share their wealth with those in need.

About anti-Sikh hate crime

This is taken to be a combination of racist and religious hate crimes, where the hostility targets Sikh people or communities and religious hate crimes that target Sikhism¹.

Sikhs can also be victim of a hostility, based on the perception that they are Muslims, in so called 'mistaken identity' or 'Islamophobic' attacks.

Hate crime and prejudice against the community

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the London 7/7 bombings, it was not unusual for turbaned and bearded Sikhs to be referred to as 'Bin Laden' or 'Taliban'. Some Sikhs have been physically assaulted whilst being called these names.

The first person killed in retribution for 9/11 in the US was a turbaned Sikh. One of the first places to be attacked in retribution for 7/7 in the UK was a gurdwara (Sikh place of worship). And in 2015 a Sikh dentist in Wales was almost beheaded in a revenge attack for the murder of Lee Rigby.

¹ <http://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Hate-Crime-Operational-Guidance.pdf>

Sikh women have also been targeted. In one case, which resulted in a conviction, the victims were specifically referred to in derogatory terms used for Muslims.

Attacks against places of worship

Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) have also been targeted with graffiti in hate related incidents. In 2015, anti-Muslim graffiti 'die Muslims die', was sprayed on a gurdwara in Thornaby, England. It also included the phrase 'white power' indicating a racially motivated hostility. In 2018 two gurdwaras were targeted, one in Leeds and one in Edinburgh, and in 2020 a gurdwara was attacked in a hate crime in Derby.

Impact of hate crime

Victims often suffer in silence and feel isolated. They need to know there are people who can offer support in confidence, and that the authorities understand the impact it has on their self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Barriers to accessing help for the community

Some don't feel that it's worth their while reporting such incidents to the police, and may simply be unaware, they can do this online via True Vision as an alternative to visiting a police station (<https://beta.met.police.uk/true-vision-report-hate-crime/>)

Some of the older generation may have a language barrier and would require assistance to file a report in English if they are the victim of hate crime. A Punjabi translator may be required.

Sikhs also have a concept of 'high spirits' or *chardi kala*, and this is an optimistic outlook even in the face of adversity. Therefore, it may be that some Sikhs do not want to be viewed as victims.

How to work with the community when they report hate crime

- Treating them with the respect and care that the abuser is denying them
- Reassuring them that you believe them and will support them
- Keeping their confidence and keeping the information they tell you private
- Offering to help research useful information and resources
- Offering to help them to get advice from either The Network of Sikh Organisations or The Monitoring Group, and recommending them to report incidents via True Vision, or directly to the police.

Contacts for other relevant organisations

Network of Sikh Organisations:

e-mail: info@nsouk.co.uk

Website: <http://nsouk.co.uk/>

The Monitoring Group: (anti-racist charity that promotes civil rights)

e-mail: office@tmg-uk.org

Website: <http://www.tmg-uk.org/>

020 7582 7438 | Mon-Thurs | 11am-6pm



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